

**Testimony of Robert Pacenza**  
**Presented to the Education Committee,**  
**Connecticut General Assembly**  
**March 9, 2009**

My name is Robert Pacenza. I am the Executive Director of the Food Allergy Initiative—FAI— a national non-profit organization dedicated to finding a cure for life-threatening food allergies. Since FAI was founded in 1998, we have raised more than \$60 million for research, clinical programs, education, and public policy initiatives. We are the voice for over 12 million Americans who suffer from food allergies, including thousands of people in metropolitan New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

I would like to thank Chairman Gaffey, Chairman Fleischmann, and the members of the Education Committee for this opportunity to address an issue of tremendous importance to food-allergic families in Connecticut.

In 2005, when an ACT CONCERNING FOOD ALLERGIES IN SCHOOLS was signed into law, Connecticut took a giant step forward for food-allergic school children throughout the United States. Every Connecticut public school was to implement a food allergy management plan, based on state guidelines, by July of 2006. As the first legislation of its kind, this bill has served as a model for other states.

Sadly, despite this pioneering effort, there are still schools throughout Connecticut that do not have food allergy management plans. And we hear frequently that there are also schools that have food allergy plans in place but do not adhere to them. Worse, there is no effective way to remedy such situations. As enacted, the original 2005 law does not provide for a formal process for addressing and tracking complaints, or for monitoring and enforcing compliance. Lacking a central point of contact, parents have no place to turn when faced with indifferent or uncooperative school administrators. While the intent of the law is to save lives, children's lives are needlessly put at risk every day. We appreciate your willingness to improve upon this ground breaking law by adding some compliance and procedural remedies to add to the effectiveness and enforcement of the law.

In an ideal world, the state would have a central database of information that could be accessed by state authorities, school staff, and families. But the proposed amendments to HB 6568 offer a solution that will be cost-effective, efficient, and good public policy. On behalf of FAI and the families we serve, I urge you to support these life-saving modifications.

Thank you for your support. I look forward to working with you to pass this important bill.